



The following Letter and Extracts are printed as being, it is thought, singularly well fitted to give a true impression of the character and claims of the OXFORD MISSION TO CALCUTTA.

*Letter lately received by the Vice-Chairman, from
the Bishop of Calcutta.*

Darjeeling,

May 17th, 1886.

MY DEAR WARDEN,

You will have heard that the Oxford Brothers in Calcutta have bought a house, and I feel that you and your Committee may like to know what I think of it. It is in every way a cause of thankfulness to me that they have found so suitable a place for their permanent abode. As a matter of business, they have made an excellent investment; the house is substantial, more than usually so, and though built in accordance with native ideas of domestic and social life, it can easily be made convenient, and the price is very moderate. They are indebted to Mr. Sandel, a Christian lawyer here, for the successful issue of the negotiations for the purchase. And as regards their work: the house is admirably situated, the streets about it are narrow, but some of the most respectable natives live in the neighbourhood, and it is quiet, and easy of access to that class of men which the Mission aims at influencing. Altogether, when I went to see the place I was greatly rejoiced, and I may add that the purchase of this house relieves me of a great anxiety, for it is so difficult to get hold of property in Calcutta, that I had almost begun to despair of finding any place suitable as a Mission centre. The house hitherto occupied has become less and less so, in consequence of the development of traffic, &c., all around it.

If I go on to report on the general prospects of the Mission, I must begin by saying that Townsend is proving a most excellent head, and that he has quite taken his place in the affections and confidence both of the Christian and non-Christian community. I am thankful to see that he seems to be strong physically, and that he knows how to take proper care of himself.

Of the actual results of the work, it would be presumption to speak confidently, but that the Mission is a centre of influence felt by all, there can be no sort of doubt. You probably hear details from Townsend himself, and he has experienced what all do, that the prospect is full of hope, though it may be long deferred. My impression is that of late years the attitude of the Hindus is more antagonistic towards Christianity than it was when I first came out, and this means progress ; that is, they see more clearly than they did what Christianity involves, and are feeling that if their Hinduism is to be saved they must make more of a stand against the irresistible encroachments of Christianity. Then political complications have led them to assert themselves more boldly than they used to do, and some of the phases of western thought have even led some to think that after all the eastern faith and philosophy will triumph. On the other hand, I think they perceive how many influences, not directly religious, are undermining their foundations, and some I feel sure are more than anxious about the result. Steady and persevering work must be carried on for long ; we may get a convert now and again but must wait for any great ingathering. I trust that all supporters of the Mission will believe that the work doing is most certainly making itself felt, and I should be thankful if we could have some 12 or 14 men instead of 4, for I should then wish them to start branches of work at such places as Dacca or Patna, where great openings are presenting themselves. I have said nothing about Brown's School, which is now to be linked with Bishop's College. This is a right move I believe, and for me settles another long pending question. All here feel that the connection will strengthen the work as a whole, and promote the interests of the direct Mission work. I trust that your health is improved.

I am, yours sincerely,

EDWARD R. CALCUTTA.

The following statements of the Rev. J. Stephenson, made at the Annual Meeting in Oxford this year, deserve attention. Mr. Stephenson, who is Senior Chaplain under Government in the Diocese of Calcutta, speaks in the character of one entirely unconnected with the Mission, and experienced in Indian life and needs.

I have seen the work of your Oxford Mission, and I can truly say that as long as I live I shall feel an enthusiastic affection and admiration for it. * * I shall never forget when I left Calcutta in November, the Oxford men saying to me "You go to Oxford and tell them how we are getting on." It seems to be always as if these men really look to Oxford for that sympathy and assistance which should enable them, under God, to carry on at all. * * I wish to emphasise what I consider the extreme importance of the establishment of this Oxford Mission. I have seen nothing like it since I have been in India. I have seen Missions going on, and Missions in which I have been deeply interested. * * But this Oxford Mission has come in a time when that sort of Mission is most needed. I have watched the inception of that Mission, and I have watched the work of that Mission, and from my heart I thank God for it. I believe that India is in peril of sinking into atheism. I cannot think, I wish I could, that the disintegrating process which is going on must necessarily end in Christianity. I think that this state of things is, as Sir Charles Turner remarked, very much owing to education, and the influence of Europeans, but I am not going to join in that cry which I don't believe in, that the European is worse in India than the European at home. * * But still for the European to have any effect upon the native, he must not be as good as the average Christian; he must be a great deal better. The life of an indifferent Christian tells heavily against Christianity, and I think that in many cases the Hindoos have very grave doubts indeed as to whether we have any religion at all. I think it will be allowed that we have to lay to our account a vast and increasing amount of unbelief, and we have to remember that a great deal of that comes from our Universities; and I say, on that ground, the Oxford Mission is entitled to our gratitude inasmuch as it has helped to do away with that reproach, and to undo as Christian Missionaries, the work which unchristian men from our Universities have done. * * * * *

I say that, considering all things, it has been a wonderful success, in ways which were never contemplated and which are of the very

highest value. What is the great want just now in Calcutta? The great need is to raise the level of the Christian Community, to bind Christian hearts together, and to oppose the most effectual antidote to that disunion which is the secret of our weakness and disasters both in the Native and English Churches and every Church I have seen. It is very wonderful how the Oxford Mission has had an influence in that way. * * They have leavened the Christian lump; they have won hearts to them in a wonderful way. I have been much struck with the way in which the native Christians of all classes and all communities in their difficulties and trials seem to turn to the Oxford Mission (applause). I cannot help saying, and I am sure it is a reverent thing to say, though it sounds a strong thing to say, that the Oxford Mission, carrying as it has done the sign of the Cross, like its Master is drawing all hearts in Calcutta unto it. When I knew that Mission most intimately it consisted of two men only, and to me it is almost a miracle that it ever survived; I shall never forget how I watched that Mission with a sorrowful heart, and I believe it would have been irreparable if that Mission had been allowed to perish. I trust you will excuse me for saying that I believe that never again will that Mission be allowed to reach that point of weakness. There is Mr. Brown, full of strength and full of study, as I know to my cost; at least I know how he talked with me when he thought I was not quite right on a point of truth. I should think he must have been in his University days a good rower. Then there is Mr. Smith, of whom I can only speak with enthusiasm. To me he is one of the most heroic figures in India, with his slender frame and weak health, his humility and his constantly revived energy. The way in which those men not only kept that Mission afloat, but made it a power, I think is a signal proof of God's blessing on that Mission. I cannot help thinking and saying that no life lived for Christ is lived in vain, and I believe some of the success and blessing which rest upon that Mission are due to the martyr who has gone, and the martyr who is still living*. There is a blessing resting upon that Mission for the sake of those devoted men. Father O'Neil, it is said, when he was asked what sort of country India was, said "It is as good as any other place to die in." He proved that, for he died in India, and he died as he lived, a noble Christian. But India is a place to live in, too. I can only call the lives of those two men a sort of holy

* Mr. Stephenson refers to the Rev. M. F. Argles, Fellow of S. John's, whose health broke down after a short term of work at the Mission, and who died on his return home, and to the Rev. E. F. Willis, before Vice-Principal of Cuddesdon, first Head of the Mission, who returned to England with his health for the time at least shattered by the unceasing toil to which he had submitted himself.

scramble; there might have been ten men for the work they did. But I trust, at any rate, there will be no further martyrs through any fault of those here in failing to support them. The arrival of Mr. Townsend and Mr. Walker is the best guarantee against that.

The constitution of the Mission is in its favour, and I trust the name† is prophetic of what the Mission is to be. Of all places Calcutta is the one through which to reach Bengal. So that the Mission, I think, in its constitution, in its locality, and in its various circumstances, has the best promise of success. If it be asked what it has done and what it is, I say it is a home of holiness; you cannot go near those men, and you cannot go to that place, without feeling the better for it, or wishing to be better. I say that it has raised the level of the Clergy of Calcutta. I myself have wished and tried to be better since I knew the Oxford Mission, and I owe them a debt of gratitude. And it is not only a home of holiness, but a home of theology. The Oxford Mission are doing what they can to help forward the cause of Christian unity. As you know there is great danger of a false unity, but as long as we have the Oxford Mission, I think we have there a guarantee that this unity shall be of a real kind.

Mr. Townsend at the last anniversary of the Calcutta Mission, said "This Mission represents the missionary aspect of the greatest University in the world." That is a great assertion, and surely it is for us to make good that assertion. In order to do that the number of men must be still further increased, and the strength of the Mission more efficiently maintained, and surely it is no light thing, if we think of it, that Oxford and this great University should have a part in the recovery to Christ of the greatest heritage ever given to man to win for God.

Mr. Stephenson's remarks were confirmed by Mr. Gore, who spent some months with the Mission two years ago, and who said—

I own, so far as a visitor gets an impression about these matters, that certainly what Mr. Stephenson said very much represents the impression I got, and that was that the work the Mission had put itself in the way to do was just the sort of work it ought to be doing, that it elevated the conception of what the Christian life meant, and that no work could be on stronger and healthier, and more hopeful lines than their work was.

† The Brotherhood of the Epiphany.

The Mission has lately obtained (partly by the generosity of one of its working members) a house in the centre of the Native quarter of Calcutta. By an arrangement with Bishop's College, the Mission has also been able to secure the permanence of the Boys' School which it had founded,—the only Native Christian Boarding School in Calcutta,—while it is relieved of much of the special expense and responsibility which it entailed, and gains freedom for its other work.

The present members of the Mission are as follows :

Rev. C. W. TOWNSEND, M.A., Keble College, late Vice-Principal of Salisbury Theological College ;

Rev. E. F. BROWN, M.A., late Scholar of Trinity Coll. ;

Rev. P. S. SMITH, late Scholar of University College, Oriental Fellow of S. Augustin's Coll., Cambridge ;

Rev. C. H. WALKER, M.A., Oriel College ;

the Hon. Treasurer of the Mission at home is

H. O. WAKEMAN, Esq., All Souls College, Oxford ;

and its Bankers are

Messrs. PARSONS AND CO., Old Bank, Oxford.

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